

De Sade on Virtue and Vice

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE
MARQUIS DE SADE ILLUSTRATING HIS VIEWS
UPON MORALITY AND SEX

Translated by
A. F. NIEMOELLER

De Sade on Virtue and Vice

**SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF THE
MARQUIS DE SADE ILLUSTRATING HIS VIEWS
UPON MORALITY AND SEX**

Translated by
A. F. NIEMOELLER

**HALDEMAN-JULIUS PUBLICATIONS
GIRARD, KANSAS**

Copyright, 1946
By E. Haldeman-Julius

Printed in the United States of America

TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

Donatien Alphonse Francois de Sade, better known as the infamous Marquis de Sade (though in his later life, after the death of his father, he became a Comte), is an outstanding proof of the contention frequently made that a man is far more remembered for his vices than for his virtues. Not that de Sade was remarkable in any degree for his virtues, but in the field of vice he so distinguished himself that today his name remains memorialized in sexual psychopathology in the term *sadism*—which is no mean accomplishment, when all is said and done, for if in other lines of endeavor a practitioner can manage to have his name made part of the terminology of his art (as for example, an explorer to get a mountain titled after him, an astronomer to have a star made a nominal part of the family, or a physiologist to saddle a lowly bacterium with his Latinized cognomen) it is usually considered a crowning achievement ample to reward a long and arduous career. That de Sade was assiduous at his trade, both in its daily, personal performance and in its literary aspects, there can be no doubt, and he has in consequence deservedly received this ultimate phraseologic accolade.

De Sade was born in Paris, France, on June 2, 1740. He was of an old and noble family extending back to the 13th century at which time the family's founder had adapted its name from that of the village of Saze, in Provence. In the 14th century a member of the line, one Hugues de Sade, had a wife known as Madonna Laura and she, chancing to be seen by the famed poet Petrarch, became the renowned "Laura" of some of Petrarch's most ecstatic sonnets—thus the de Sade lineage boasts pin-nacles both of sweetness and light and bitterness and dark.

Not too much is known of de Sade's early life. Some of his youthful years seem to have been spent with his grandmother at Languedoc whence he returned to Paris to continue his education until at the outbreak of the Seven Years War (1756) he was hurried into the army by his family. Shortly after his leaving the service his family decided he should marry and arranged for it to be with Renee Pelagie Cordier de Montreuil, the daughter of a respected Parisian judge. For some reason (probably adherence to some doctrine of wifely duty rather than love) this woman remained devoted to de Sade throughout the innumerable vicissitudes, trials, and embarrassments of his long and checkered career (not least of which were his infatuation and subsequent escapades with her young sister Louise), enduring even the wasting of their fortune and eventual descent into poverty.

Shortly after this marriage de Sade began seriously to apply himself to various refinements of debauchery and to undergo his long series of arrests and confinements, in prisons and in asylums. He consorted with a group of excessively dissolute young noblemen and got himself into no end of trouble and scandal. The "Affaire Keller" in which he was accused of whipping a prostitute for his own pleasure, gained him a short imprisonment and an exile from Paris. The first three years of this exile he passed fairly quietly with his wife and children at a place called La Coste, during which time he devoted himself to writing, distracting himself with a few affairs with chance women (including a dancer) or, lacking better, the servant girls.

Tiring of his retirement, in 1772 he went off on a junket to Marseilles with a faithful valet. It was here that the famous incident of the cantharides-doped bonbons took place, of which there have been so many and different versions. Stripped of all historical hysterics,

this affair appears to have been little more than a private orgy of de Sade, his valet, and three *filles de joie* at which various permutations of the love act were indulged in, to the accompaniment of some flagellation, and de Sade offered the girls some of his high-powered bonbons, but only one of them accepted and she got merely sick, but did not die. This little party, nevertheless, led to a condemnation of poisoning and sodomy carrying a sentence of death, but *in contumacium* or the absence of the accused, however, de Sade and his valet wisely having skipped town. That this judgment must have been railroaded through by enemies of de Sade appears most likely in view of the fact that the sentence was later revoked and de Sade was re-sentenced to a simple fine of 50 francs. To escape the original penalty, de Sade fled to Italy, taking with him the younger sister of his wife, Louise, who died there a short time after. Later, the harsh judgments being revoked, he returned to Paris; but his mother-in-law, venomous over his elopement with Louise, used her influence to have him imprisoned and from 1777 to 1784 he was confined in the prison of Vincennes, after which he was transferred to the Bastille until 1789. It was during his sojourn at the Bastille that he wrote most of the books that we have today—a great amount of his work has been lost in one fashion or another. In July of 1789 he was removed to the asylum at Charenton, just a few days before the mob stormed and took the Bastille, and in March of the following year he was released. Practically penniless, de Sade now turned to writing in earnest to live and turned out a mass of books in many of which he took nasty slaps at leading public figures of the day, including Napoleon and his wife Josephine, with the result that de Sade soon found himself back in the asylum at Charenton. At Charenton he seems to have enjoyed a good deal of privilege and liberty and he there continued to write, received numerous distinguished visitors, and so devoted himself to food as to become grossly obese. He died at Charenton on December 2, 1814.

De Sade was endowed with a keen, penetrating, and indefatigable mind. He thought copiously and constantly upon all conceivable subjects, and simply because his peculiar temperament led him frequently to frame his arguments and conclusions in rather bluntly obscene terms it does not in any wise lessen the validity of his dialectic or the cogency of his deductions. To my mind, if de Sade had any real fault as a thinker it was his tendency toward verbosity rather than in the direction of obscenity. How that man did talk! Even many of his obscene descriptions become wearisome through wordiness. But then, long, solitary years in the Bastille are no more conducive to conciseness of expression than to chastity of thought, and freedom with words was about the only liberty left him during long periods.

Ever the *doctrinaire*, forever attempting to sell some outrageous point of view, de Sade is never more earnest or interesting than when promulgating his attitudes on moral issues, good and evil, or sexual matters. It is a treat in logic to follow his setting up formal premises to arrive at the most unbelievably unconventional conclusions. In this volume is presented a collection of some of the most striking examples of his endeavors along those lines. Though presented in the form of essays, they really are excerpts from his works, and in particular from his novel *Justine*. They are given just as de Sade wrote them and, save for an occasional paraphrase to gloss over an expression a bit too rich for the average American intellectual digestion, the translation is quite literal. Read them and reflect on the position a man can talk himself into if he has a sharp mind, a glib tongue, and plenty of time on his hands.

A. F. N., St. Louis, Mo.

DE SADE'S INTRODUCTION

The chief work of philosophy should be to develop the means Fortune makes use of in order to attain the ends it proposes for man, and to outline according to this some plan of conduct which can make this unhappy bipedal individual understand the manner in which he must walk down the thorny path of life so as to forestall the bizarre caprices of this Fortune which has by turn been named Destiny, God, Providence, Fatality, or Chance, all denominations which are as vicious as they are devoid of good sense, each as much as the next, and which bring to the mind only vague and purely subjective ideas.

If, full of vain, ridiculous, and superstitious respect for our absurd social conventions, it happens in spite of this that we encountered only brambles where the wicked gathered roses, will not the people naturally vicious through system, taste, or temperament calculate, with enough probability, that it is better to abandon themselves to vice than to resist it? Will they not say, with some appearance of reason, that virtue, however beautiful it may be, nevertheless becomes the worst position one can take when it finds itself too feeble to struggle against vice, and when in an absolutely corrupt century, as the one we live in, the surest is to do as the others? A bit more philosophic, if you wish, will they not say, with the angel Jesrad of *Zadig*, that there is no evil from which a good is not born, and that they can, according to this, give themselves over to evil as much as they wish, since it is in fact only one of the manners of doing good? Will they not add, with some certitude, that it is indifferent to the general plan whether such or such be good or wicked in preference; that if misfortune persecutes virtue and prosperity accompanies crime, the things being equal to the intentions of nature, it is infinitely better to take one's place among the wicked who prosper than among the virtuous who come to grief.

It is therefore essential that the fools cease worshipping this ridiculous idol of virtue, which up till now has paid them only with ingratitude, and that the people of spirit, commonly given over by principle to the delicious extravagances of vice and debauchery, take courage on seeing the striking examples of good fortune and prosperity which accompany them almost inevitably along the wanton road they choose. It is doubtless frightful to have to depict on the one hand the terrifying misfortunes with which Heaven overwhelms the gentle and sensible woman who best respects virtue; and on the other, the influence of prosperity on those who plague and mortify this same woman. But the man of letters, philosopher enough to speak the truth, overcomes these imperfections; and cruel by necessity, he pitilessly snatches away with one hand the superstitious finery with which the foolish embellish virtue, and with the other boldly shows, to the ignorant man who was being deceived, vice in the midst of the charms and enjoyments which surround it and follow it unendingly.

ON CONTINENCE

"What a false idea, my dear girl, you have of prudence! and how can you believe that a young person is lacking in it by giving herself to those who will have her? Continence in a woman is an impractical virtue, my child; do not flatter yourself ever to attain it. When the passions shall kindle in your soul, you will see that this manner of being

is impossible for us. Always exposed to seduction, how is it to be wished that a woman be able to resist the attractions of pleasure perpetually offered to her senses? And how make it a crime for her to succumb when everything about her strews flowers on the abyss and invites her to fling herself in? Do not deceive yourself in this, Justine, it is not virtue that is required of us, it is only its mask; and, provided that we know how to dissemble, nothing more is asked of us. She among us who should be prudent, but with the reputation of a slut, would be infinitely less nappy than she who would give herself over to all the excesses of debauchery while preserving the reputation of an honest woman. I could give myself to you as an example, Justine. I have been married for 14 years; I have never lost my husband's confidence; he would protest my prudence and virtue on his own life; and, thrown into libertinism from the first years of my matrimony, there does not exist in Paris a woman more corrupt than I. There is not a day that I do not prostitute myself to seven or eight men, and often to three at once. There is not a pimp who does not serve me, not a fine fellow who had not had me: and my husband will swear to you, when you will, that Vesta was less pure. The most complete caution, the most scrupulous hypocrisy, a great deal of art . . . of falsity: those are the means which disguise me, those are the lineaments of the mask that prudence places on my face, and I impose them on everybody. I am a whore like Messalina: they believe me prudent as Lucretia; an Atheist like Vanini: they believe me devout as St. Theresa; false as Tiberius: they believe me as sincere as Socrates, as sober as Diogenes: Apicius was less intemperate than I. In a word, I idolize all the vices. I detest all the virtues; and, if you consulted my husband, if you questioned my family, you would be told: 'Delmonse is an angel!', whilst the Prince of Darkness himself was less inclined to debauchery! For, once again, it is not the sacrifice one makes of his senses to virtues that leads to happiness; doubtless there can be no felicity in such constraint. What conduces to true happiness, therefore, is only the appearance of this virtue to which the ridiculous prejudices of man have condemned our sex."

ON PERSONAL INTEREST

Justine, retaken, was about to be exposed to the greatest dangers, if the noise of a carriage had not just then been heard on the highway. The intrepid Cour-de-Fer left Justine forthwith for his duties. He awakened his men and flew to new crimes.

"Ah, good!" cried the Dubois woman, awakened and sitting up while listening attentively. "Good! There are the cries; the blow is given. Nothing so pleases me as these signs of victory—they prove to me that our people have succeeded, and I am easy."

"But, madam," said our beautiful adventuress, "how about the victims?"

"What matter! There must always be some on this earth . . . How about those who perish at the hands of armies?"

"Ah! that is for causes . . ."

"Infinitely less important than those here. It's not in order to live that tyrants give generals the order to crush nations; it's through pride. Moved by our needs, we attack the passers-by only in the sole intention of living; and this law, the most imperious of all, completely legitimatizes our actions."

"But, madam, people work . . . they have a profession."

"Well, my girl, this is ours! It's the one that we practice from the time of our infancy, it's the one in which we have been raised; and this profession was that of the first peoples of the Universe. It alone re-establishes the equilibrium that the inequality of wealth totally de-

ranges. Robbery was held in honor in all Greece; many peoples still admit of it, favor it, and reward it as a bold action, proving at once both courage and skill . . . as a virtue, in a word, essential to all nations with any energy."

And the Dubois woman, giving herself over to her customary eloquence, was doubtless going to enter upon a detailed discussion, when the band returned bringing along a prisoner.

"There," said Cour-de-Fer, "is something to compensate me for the severity of Justine."

And they perceived, by the light of the moon, a young boy of 15 years, beautiful as love.

"I killed the father and mother," said the scoundrel; "I raped the daughter who was not yet 10 years old; and it seems to me only right that I should not pass by the son."

Thus speaking, he turned to the hay-stack of which the band was making use. Dull cries were hard . . . groans promptly covered by those of that scoundrel's lubricity. The first soon changed into shrieks which gave evidence that the prudent rogue, not wishing to leave any trace of his crime, in order to achieve this enjoyed at the same time the double pleasures of murdering the object of his lust.

"Come," he said, "calm yourself, Justine. There, I am tranquil for the present, to remain so until new desires come to arouse new horrors in me. Let us break camp, my friends," he said to the band. "We have killed six persons; the corpses are along the road, and it's likely that in a very few hours there will be no more safety here for us."

The booty was divided. Cour-de-Fer wished Justine to have her share: it amounted to 20 louis. They forced her to take them; she shuddered at being obliged to keep such money. However, they insisted; then each took up his burden and the band departed.

The next day the robbers, believing themselves in safety in the forest of Chantilly, set about counting their money while their supper was being prepared, and estimated but 200 louis as the totality of the prize.

"In truth," said one of them, "it was not worth the trouble of committing six murders for such a small sum."

"Easy, my friends," answered the Dubois woman, "It was not for the sum that, when you left, I myself exhorted you to show no mercy to those travelers; it was solely for our safety. These crimes are the law's fault, and not ours. So long as robbers are punished, they will murder in order not to be discovered. Besides," continued the shrew, "where do you get it that 200 louis are not worth six murders? One must never evaluate things except by the relation they have to our interests. The cessation of the existence of the sacrificed persons is nothing to us. Assuredly, we should not give a groat in order that these individuals might be alive rather than in the grave. Consequently, if the slightest interest offers itself to us in either of these directions, we ought without any remorse decide it by preference in our own favor; for in a totally indifferent thing we ought, if we are wise and masters of the situation, make it turn in the direction that is profitable to us and take all possible measures for the ruin of the opposer, because there is no reasonable proportion between that which affects us and that which affects others. We feel the one physically, whereas the other comes to us only morally—and moral sensations are deceitful; only material sensations are true. Thus, not only are the 200 louis enough for the six murders, but 30 sous would have sufficed to legitimize them; for those 30 sous would have procured for us a satisfaction which, although slight, ought nevertheless to affect us a great deal more keenly than had the six murders which do not bother us nor touch us in any way whatsoever. And even from the actual injury we receive only a rather agreeable titillation, according to the natural wickedness of man whose first reaction,

if one wishes to study him carefully, is always a sort of satisfaction in the ills and misfortunes of others.

"The weakness of our organs, the defect of reflection, the accursed prejudices in which we have been raised, the vain terrors of religion and the law; these are what halt fools in the career of crime, these are what prevent their immortalizing themselves. But every person filled with strength and vigor and endowed with an energetic soul, who giving preference to himself over others, as he should, will know how to weigh his interests in his own balance, how to mock God and man, brave death, and scorn the law, well impressed that it is to himself alone that he must refer everything; such a person will feel that the greatest amount of injuries to others, of which he ought physically to experience nothing, can take no place in comparison with the slightest of enjoyments purchased by that unheard-of collection of crimes. The enjoyment pleases him, it belongs to him; the effect of the crime does not affect him, it is apart from him. Now, I ask where is the reasonable man who will not prefer that which delights him to that which is foreign to him, and who will not consent to commit this slight thing, from which he will feel nothing grievous, in order to procure what affects him agreeably?"

ON EGOISM

It is astonishing what one may gather from all the data of egoism; and, unfortunately for the philanthropists, egoism is the holiest and surest of the laws of nature. It would be in vain to tell me that it is a vice; so long as I shall feel its counsels thundering and impressing themselves in the depths of my soul, I shall yield to this impulse and thrust back your errors. The majority of nature's urges being baneful to society, it follows quite simply that it has made crimes of them. But social laws have all men for their object, while those of nature are individual, and consequently preferable; for the law made by man for all men can be erroneous, whilst that inspired by nature, individually in the heart of each being, is decidedly a certain law. My principles are hard, I know, and their consequences dangerous, but what matter provided that they be just? I am the man of nature before I am the man of society, and I ought to respect and follow the laws of nature before listening to those of society: the first are infallible laws, the others will often deceive me. According to these principles, if the laws of nature oblige me to escape from those of society, if they counsel me to brave them or mock them, assuredly I shall do so unceasingly, taking all precautions that my safety will require; because all human institutions based on interests with which I am associated only as one amongst thousands of millions ought never to outweigh what is personal to me.

It was only through weakness that man set up society, in the hope of more easily satisfying his needs; but if this society grants them to him only under onerous conditions, would he not do much better to procure them himself rather than buy them so dearly? Will he not act more wisely to seek his living in the woods than to beg it in the cities, under the sad condition of stifling his inclinations, of sacrificing them to the general interests from which he never draws anything but vexations?

"Ambrose," said Severino, "you appear to me, as does Sylvestre, as quite an enemy of social conventions and human institutions."

"I abhor them," said Ambrose; "they fetter our liberty, they waste our energy, they degrade our soul, they have made of humankind a vile flock of slaves that the first intriguer may lead anywhere that it pleases him."

"What crimes," said Severino, "should reign on this earth without institutions and without masters!"

"There is what is called the reasoning of a slave," answered Ambrose. "What is a crime?"

"An action contrary to the interests of society."

"And what are the interests of society?"

"The mass of all individual interests."

"But if I prove to you that the interests of society are very far from being the sum of individual interests, and that what you consider as social interests are on the contrary only the product of particular sacrifices, will you admit to me that in taking back my rights, although I might be able to do it only through what you call a crime, I shall nevertheless do quite right to commit this crime since it re-establishes the balance and brings back to me the portion of energy I had yielded to your social purposes only at the price of a happiness it refuses me? This hypothesis granted, what then will you call a crime at present? Eh! no, no, no, there is no crime. There are some infractions of the social pact; but I ought to scorn this pact from the time that the impulses of my heart warn me that it cannot contribute to the happiness of my life, and I ought to cherish everything which outrages it."

ON THE NECESSITY FOR LIBERTINISM FOR YOUNG GIRLS

Is it to herself that a young girl can do wrong in being a libertine? Undoubtedly no, for she does nothing but yield to the sweetest impulses of nature which, certainly, would not suggest them to her if they should be injurious to her. Has it not placed in her the desire to prostitute herself to all men among the number of the first necessities of life? And is there a single woman who can say that she does not feel the carnal need of the flesh as imperiously as those of eating and drinking? Now I ask you, Justine, how could nature make it a crime for a woman to yield to the desires which make up the most sublime part of her existence? Shall we consider the libertinism of a being of our species, relative to society? Assuredly, I believe that it is rare to find an action more agreeable to the sex that shares the world with us than that of the prostitution of a pretty woman. And where would it be, this sex, if we all, infected with false systems, with virtues that imbeciles preach to us, were obstinate and never offered anything but refusals to the frenzied desires of the men? Reduced to playing with themselves or working upon each other, it should be necessary for them to give up our commerce completely. For you will confess to me that marriage would not be able to settle the matter; it is quite as impossible for a man to be satisfied with a single woman as it is for a woman to content herself with a single man. Nature detests, abjures, contradicts all these dogmas of your absurd civilization, and the mischief of your imbecile logic does not become part of *its* laws: let us listen only to it and we shall never be deceived. In a word, Justine, believe some one who has some experience, some erudition, some principles, and be persuaded that the best and most reasonable thing a young girl can do in the world is to prostitute herself to all who wish her whilst preserving, as I have just explained to you, an exterior which can awe people.

ADVICE TO YOUNG GIRLS ON THEIR RIGHT TO PLEASURE

Now listen to me, Eugenie. It is absurd to say that as soon as a young girl is off her mother's breast she ought from that moment become the victim of her parents' will, to remain so until her last breath. It is not in a century in which the scope and rights of man have come to be augmented with so many pains, that young girls ought to continue to be-

lieve themselves the slaves of their families, when it is certain that the powers of these families over them are absolutely chimerical. Let us listen to nature on a subject so interesting and let the laws of the animals, so very much closer to it, serve us for a moment as an example. With them, do the parental duties extend beyond the first physical needs? Do not the fruits of the enjoyment of the male and female possess all their liberty, all their rights? As soon as they can walk and feed themselves alone, from that time on do the authors of their being know them? And they, do they believe themselves to owe something to those who gave them life? Undoubtedly no. By what right, then, are the children of men subjected to other duties? And what sets them up, these duties, if it is not the avarice or ambition of the fathers? Now I ask if it is just that a young girl who is beginning to feel and reason submit herself to such restraints? Is it not, then, prejudice quite alone which prolongs her chains? And is there anything more ridiculous than seeing a young girl of 15 or 16 years, burned up by desires that she is obliged to conquer, wait in torments worse than those of hell until it please her parents, after having made her youth unhappy, further to sacrifice her ripe age by immolating her to their perfidious cupidity in associating her, in spite of herself, with a husband who either has nothing to make himself loved or who has everything to make himself hated! Ah, no! no! Eugenie, such bonds will soon destroy themselves; it is necessary that, releasing the young girl from the paternal roof at the age of reason, after having given her a national education, she be left her own mistress at 15 years to become what she will. She will fall into vice? Eh! What matter!

Are not the services that a young girl renders in consenting to make the happiness of all those who apply to her, infinitely more important than those she offers her husband in isolating herself? The destiny of woman is to be like the she-dog, like the she-wolf: she ought to belong to all who wish her. It is manifestly an outrage to the destiny that nature imposes on women to enchain them with the absurd bond of solitary wedlock.

Let us hope that people will open their eyes and that in assuring the liberty of all individuals they will not forget the lot of the unfortunate girls. But if they are so to be pitied through being forgotten, let them, themselves taking a stand above custom and prejudice, boldly trample underfoot the shameful irons with which people presume to enslave them: they will then soon triumph over custom and opinion. Man, becoming wiser because he will be freer, will feel the injustice it would be to scorn those who would act thusly, and that the action of yielding to the impulses of nature, regarded as a crime among a captive people, can no longer be so among a free people.

Lay down, then, the legitimacy of these principles, Eugenie, and break your irons at whatever price it may be, despite the vain remonstrances of an imbecile mother to whom you legitimately owe only hate and scorn. If your father, who is a libertine, desires you early, let him enjoy you, but without chaining you; break the yoke if he wishes to enslave you: more than one girl has acted the same with her father. In a word, use your body as you will: it is for that you are placed in the world; no limits to your pleasures but those of your strength and will; no exception of time, place, or person; all hours, all places, all men ought to serve your sensual pleasures; continence is an impossible virtue for which nature, its rights violated, soon punishes us with a thousand misfortunes. So long as the laws shall be such as they are today, let us use some evils: public opinion constrains us to it; but let us compensate ourselves in private for this cruel chastity we are obliged to have in public.

Let a young girl strive to procure a close woman friend who, free and acquainted with the world, can help her secretly taste the pleasures. In default of this, let her try to seduce the Arguses with which she is

surrounded; let her entreat them to prostitute her, and promising them all the money they will be able to draw from her sale either these Arguses by themselves or through the women they will find, which are termed "procuresses," will soon round out the young girl's views of things. Let her then throw dust in the eyes of all around her, brothers, cousins, friends, parents; let her lend herself to everything if necessary to hide her conduct even to making, if it should be required, the sacrifice of her tastes and affections: an intrigue which will have displeased her and to which she will have given herself over only through policy, will soon lead her into a more agreeable situation, and there she is "launched." But let her no longer return to the prejudices of her childhood: menaces, exhortations, duties, virtues, counsels, let her trample all of them underfoot; let her stubbornly reject and scorn, in a word, everything that does not tend to deliver her into the bosom of wantonness.

Those predictions of misfortunes along the way of libertinism are extravagances of our parents. There are thorns everywhere, but roses are to be found above them along the course of vice—it is only in the myriads of paths of virtue that nature has never brought any into being. The only rock to fear in the first of these roads is the opinion of men; but where is the girl of spirit who, with a little reflection, will not rise above this contemptible opinion? The pleasures received through esteem, Eugenie, are only moral pleasures, suitable solely for certain heads; but those of fleshly love please all, and these seductive attractions soon compensate for that illusory scorn which it is difficult to escape in braving public opinion, but which many sensible women have derided to the point of making an additional pleasure of it. Enjoy your body, Eugenie, enjoy it, my dear angel; it is yours, yours alone; it is but you alone of the world who has the right to enjoy it and to make it enjoy what seems good to you.

Profit from the happiest time of your life; they are all too short, these happy years of our pleasures! If we are fortunate enough to have enjoyed them, some delicious memories will console and amuse us in our old age. But should we lose them, bitter regrets and frightful remorse will rend us and will join with the torments of age to fill the dismal approaches to the grave with tears and brambles.

Do you have the passion for immortality? Well, it is through the use you make of your body, my dear, that you will remain in the memory of men. The Lucretias have long been forgotten, whilst the Theodoras and Messalinas make up the sweetest and most frequent conversations of life. How then, Eugenie, can you not prefer a condition which, crowning us with flowers here below, further leaves us hope of a worship well beyond the tomb? How, I say, can you not prefer this condition to one which, making us vegetate stupidly on earth, promises us after our existence only scorn and oblivion!

ON EVIL

It is in nowise necessary that misfortune be revenged. It hopes it because it desires it; it flatters itself with it because it wishes it. This colossal idea consoles it, but it is none the less false. Things are better. It is essential that misfortune suffer; its humiliation and griefs rank among the laws of nature and its existence is useful to the general plan, like that of prosperity which crushes it. Such is the truth which ought to stifle remorse in the soul of the scoundrel and malefactor. Therefore, let them not constrain themselves, let them give themselves blindly to all the injuries the ideas for which the politic aims of nature suggest in them: it is the only method this universal mother knows for making us the agents of her laws. When her secret inspirations dispose us to EVIL, it is because evil is necessary for her; it is because she wishes it; it is

because she has need of it; it is because the sum of crimes being incomplete—insufficient for the laws of equilibrium, the only laws by which she may be governed—she demands these further ones as the complement of her balance. Let him not take fright, then, nor pause, he whose soul inclines toward evil; let him commit it without fear, from the time that he feels the impulse; it is only in resisting it that he would outrage nature.

ON VIRTUE AND VICE

In a totally vicious society, virtue would serve nothing: our associations not being of this sort, one must absolutely either feign virtue or make use of it in order to be less fearful to all those who follow it. Let a person not adopt it, he will become useless. Therefore, I am not wrong when I maintain that his necessity is only of public opinion or circumstance. Virtue, let us not deceive ourselves, is not of an incontestable value; it is only a manner of conducting oneself which varies according to each climate and which, consequently, is in nothing more real than the styles in usage in a certain province and not in others. It is only what is useful in all ages, to all peoples, in all countries, that might really be good; but what has not a demonstrated utility, and what perpetually changes, should not be able to pretend to the character of goodness. Thus it comes about that the theists, in establishing a chimera, place immutability in the ranks of the perfections of their God. But virtue is entirely deprived of this characteristic. Not only are there virtues of religion, style, circumstance, temperament, and climate, but there are also some of government. The virtues of a revolution, for example, are indeed far removed from being those of a tranquil government. Brutus, the greatest of men in a republic, had been jaded in a monarchy; Labarre, executed under Louis XV, had perhaps merited crowns some years later. In general, there are no two people on the face of the earth who may be virtuous in the same manner: therefore, virtue has nothing real, nothing of intrinsic good, and in no way deserves our worship. One must make use of it as a prop, hypocritically adopting that of the country in which one lives, in order that those who practice it by taste, or who must revere it through their position, leave you in peace; and in order also that this respected virtue you hold to may secure you, by its weight of convention, from the crimes of those who profess vice. But, once again, all this is circumstantial, and nothing of all this assigns a real merit to virtue.

And so it is with virtue, which is simply impossible for certain men. Recommend chastity to a libertine, temperance to a drunkard, benevolence to a ferocious man; nature, stronger than your recommendations and laws, will break all the restraints you would impose, and you will be forced to agree that a virtue which opposes or combats the passions can only be highly dangerous. Amongst these men I have just cited there will assuredly be vices opposed to these virtues that will become preferable, since they will be the only manner, the only way of living which will best conform with their physique or organs. There will be, according to this hypothesis, some very useful vices. Now, how could virtue be useful if it is demonstrated that its opposite may be also? To this you will be told: virtue is useful to others, and on this score it is good; for if it is allowed to do only what is good for others, I in my turn shall receive only good. Let us here take great care: this reasoning is only a sophism. For the little good I receive from others, by reason of their practicing virtue, I make, through the obligation of practicing it in my turn, a million sacrifices which in no wise compensate me; receiving less than I give, I thus make a bad bargain; I experience a great deal more ill from the privations I endure from being virtuous than I receive good from those who are so. The pact not being equal, I ought

therefore not to submit to it. And surely if in being virtuous and not doing others as much good as I receive pain in constraining myself to be so, would it not be better that I renounce procuring them a happiness which must procure me so much ill? There now remains the wrong I can do others in being vicious, and the ill that I in my turn shall receive if everyone resembles me. In admitting complete circulation of vice, assuredly I run a risk, I agree; but the vexation I experience through what I risk is compensated by the pleasure from what I make others risk. Thenceforth, everybody is equally almost happy, which is not and could not be in a society where some are good and others wicked, because perpetual snares result from this *melange* which do not exist in the other case. In the mixed society all interests are diverse: there is the source of an infinitude of misfortunes. In the totally vicious association all interests are equal; each individual who composes it is endowed with the same tastes, the same penchants, all march toward the same goal, all are happy; not so when one is agreed to worship the good. But, the fools tell you, evil does not make happiness; no, not when one is agreed to worship the good. But scorn, vilify what you call good, no longer revere anything but what you have the stupidity to call evil and all men will take pleasure in committing it, not because it will be permitted (this would often be a cause for diminishing its attraction), but because the law might no longer punish and because through the fear it inspires it lessens the pleasure that nature has placed in crime.

I am supposing a society in which it will be agreed that incest (let us embrace this moral offense like all others), that incest, I say, be a crime. Those who give themselves over to it will be unhappy because opinion, law, worship, all will come to chill their pleasure; those who will desire to commit this evil, or who will not dare because of these restraints, will be equally unhappy: thus the law which proscribes incest will only have made unfortunates. But if in an adjacent society incest be not a crime, those who will not desire it will not be unhappy, and those who will desire it will be happy; therefore, the society which will have permitted this action will better suit men than the one which will have set up this same action as a crime. It is the same with all other things clumsily considered as criminal. By regarding them from this point of view, you make a mass of unhappy people; by permitting them, no one complains. For the one who loves anything whatsoever gives himself over to it in peace; and the one who does not care for it either remains in a sort of indifference which is in nowise dolorous, or compensates himself for the injury he might have received through it by a number of other injuries with which in his turn he harasses those whom he does not like.

Therefore, in a criminal society everyone finds himself highly content, or in a state of heedlessness which has nothing of pain and which consequently has nothing good, nothing respectable, nothing at all of what is to render one happy according to what is called virtue. Let those who follow it not pride themselves on that species of homage that the nature of the constitution of our societies forces us to render it: it is purely an affair of circumstance. But in reality this worship is ridiculous, it is chimerical, and the virtue which for a moment obtains it is not finer for it. Vice, on the contrary, is full of charm; in its practice alone is all the happiness of life; it alone inflames, warms the passions; and he who like me has acquired the habit of living in it no longer even has the faculty for adopting another course. I know that prejudices combat it, that opinion sometimes triumphs over it; but is there anything in the world more contemptible than prejudices, and anything which so merits being braved as opinion? "Opinion," said Voltaire, "is queen of the world." Is this not to admit that it, like queens, has only a conventional power, only an arbitrary authority? And what is the opinion of men to me? What matter what they think of me personally provided that I find happiness in the principles I have made myself?

One of two things: either they hide this opinion from me, and from that moment they do me no ill; or they give evidence of it to me, and from then on I experience a further enjoyment. Yes, undoubtedly, an enjoyment: the scorn of fools is such for the philosopher. It is delightful to brave public opinion, and the acme of wisdom doubtless is to reduce it to silence. General esteem is praised to us: and what does it gain one, I ask you, to be esteemed by others? This sentiment is costly to man; it affords pride: I may sometimes love the one whom I scorn, never the one whom I revere; this latter will always have a great number of enemies, while the other will scarcely be minded. Let us not, then, swing between two modes of which the one, virtue, leads only to the most stupid and most monotonous inaction, and the other, vice, to everything most delightful on earth that man can hope for.

ON THE INUTILITY OF VIRTUE

It is not the choice that man makes of virtue which causes him to find happiness; for virtue, like crime, is only one of the manners of conducting oneself in the world. It is therefore not a case of following one of these manners rather than the other, but is only a question of walking along the main road; he who keeps away from it is always wrong.

In a world entirely virtuous I should counsel you to virtue, because the rewards being thereto attached happiness would infallibly go with it; but in a world totally corrupt, I should never counsel you to anything but vice. He who does not follow the route of the others inevitably perishes; everything he encounters hurts him, and as he is the weakest he must necessarily be broken. It is in vain that laws would re-establish order and lead men back to virtue. Too prevaricating to undertake it, too ineffectual to succeed in it, they may manage to lead away from the beaten path for a moment, but they will never have it quitted. When the general interest of men will lead them to corruption, he who will not wish to corrupt himself with them will thus struggle against general interest. Now, what happiness can one expect who perpetually opposes the interest of others? Will you tell me that it is vice that opposes the interests of men? I should grant you this in a world composed of equal parts of good and wicked people because then the interest of one would visibly clash with that of the other. But this is no longer so in a completely corrupt society. My vices, then, outraging only the vicious person, determine in him other vices which compensate him, and we both find ourselves content. The reciprocation becomes general; it is a multitude of mutual clashes and injuries where each one at once regaining what he has just lost, finds himself unendingly in a happy position. Vice is dangerous only to virtue which, feeble and timid, dares undertake nothing. But when it no longer exists on earth, when its wearisome reign is ended, then vice, no longer outraging any but the vicious, will cause other vices to hatch out, but will no longer alter virtues. How would you not have a thousand times run aground in your life, Justine, by continually taking in the reverse direction the road that everyone follows? If you had given yourself up to the torrent you would have found port like me. Does he who would go up a river cover as much ground in the same day as he who would come down it? You always speak to me of Providence. Eh! who proves to you that this Providence loves order, and consequently virtue? Does it not endlessly give you examples of its injustices and irregularities? Is it by sending men war, plague, and famine; is it by having formed a universe vicious in all its aspects that it manifests in your eyes its extreme love for good? Why would you have it that vicious individuals displease it since it itself acts only through vices, since all is vice and corruption in its works, since

all is crime and disorder in its caprices? But from what else do we take these impulses which lead us to evil? Is it not its hand which gives us them? Is there a single one of our desires which is not its work? Therefore, is it reasonable to say that it would allow us or give us inclinations for a thing which would be injurious to it or which would be useless to it? If, then, vices serve it, why should we resist them, by what right should we work to destroy them, and whence does it arise that we stifle their voice? A bit more philosophy in the world would soon place everything back in order and we would make magistrates and legislators see that the crimes they blame and punish with so much severity sometimes have a degree of utility much greater than those virtues which they preach without themselves practicing them, and without ever rewarding them.

ON THE IMAGINATION

It is singular, you pretend, that filthy and crapulous things can produce in our senses the excitation essential as the complement of their delirium; but before being astonished at this, it must be felt, dear girl, that objects have only that value in our eyes that our imagination gives them. It is therefore quite possible, according to this invariable truth, that not only the most bizarre things, but even the vilest and most frightful can affect us quite perceptibly.

The imagination of man is a faculty of his mind in which, through the medium of his senses, objects come to paint and modify themselves, and then form his thoughts in accordance with the first perception of these objects. But this imagination, itself resulting from the sort of organization with which man is endowed, adapts the objects received only in such or such a manner, and then creates thoughts only according to the effects produced by the clash of the perceived objects. Let a comparison facilitate for your eyes what I expound. Have you not seen, Justine, mirrors of different forms: some which diminish objects, others which enlarge them, these which render them frightful, those which lend them charms? Do you imagine, now, that if each of these glasses united the creative faculty with the objective faculty it would not give an extremely different portrait of the same man who looked at himself there; and would not this portrait be in accordance with the manner in which it would have perceived the object? If to the two faculties we have just lent this glass it now joins that of sensibility, would it not have for this man, seen by it in such or such a manner, the kind of sentiment that it would be possible for it to conceive for the sort of being that it would have perceived? The glass which would have seen him as frightful would hate him, the one which would have seen him as beautiful would love him; but this nevertheless would always be the same individual.

Such is the imagination of man. The same object presents itself there under as many forms as it has modes; and according to the effect received on this imagination through the object, whatever it may be, it determines to love or hate it. If the encounter with the perceived object strikes it in an agreeable manner, it loves it, it prefers it, although it may have in it no real charm; and if this object, although of a certain value in the eyes of another, strikes the imagination upon which it acts only in a disagreeable manner, it will draw away from it, because none of our sentiments either take shape or realize themselves save in accordance with the effect of the different objects on the imagination. According to this, is there anything astonishing in that what keenly pleases some may displease others; and conversely, that the most extraordinary and monstrous thing finds disciples? The disfigured man also finds mirrors which render him handsome.

Now, if we admit that the enjoyment of the senses be always dependent upon the imagination, always regulated by imagination, one will not need be astonished at the numerous variations that the imagination will suggest in its enjoyments, at the infinite multitude of different tastes and passions that the various digressions of this imagination will give birth to. These tastes, although lustful, will not necessarily be more striking than those of a simple sort. There is no reason for finding a fancy for the table less extraordinary than a fancy for the bed, and in both cases it is no more astonishing to idolize a thing that the generality of men find detestable, than it is to love one commonly recognized as good. The unanimity gives proof of conformity in the organs, but nothing in favor of the thing loved. Three-quarters of the universe may find the odor of the rose delicious without this being able to serve as a proof, either for condemning the quarter who should find it evil, or for demonstrating that this odor be truly agreeable.

ON THE VARIETY OF TASTES AND COLORS

What is most singular is that so long as it is a question only of futile things, we are not astonished by the difference of tastes; but as soon as it concerns lust, there is everything in an uproar. The women, ever watchful of their rights so that their weakness and small worth engage to lose nothing, tremble at every moment lest some one carries off something from them, and if, unfortunately, in amusing oneself with them one employs any behavior which shocks their cult, there we have crimes worthy of the scaffold! What inconsistency! What atrocity! Ought not then the pleasures of the senses repay a man better than the other pleasures of life? In a word, ought the temple of generation better fix our inclinations, more surely awaken our desires, than the part of the body either the most contrary to or the farthest removed from it, than the most fetid or most disgusting emanation from this body! It ought not, it seems to me, appear more astonishing to see a man carry singularity into the pleasures of libertinism than it ought to be to see him employ it in the other functions of life; once again, in the one or the other case his singularity is the result of his organs. Is it his fault if what affects you is nothing for him, and if he is moved only by what is repugnant to you? Where is the man who would not instantly reform his tastes, affections, and inclinations to the general plan, and who would not prefer to be like everybody than to be an oddity, if he were master of it? It is the most stupid and barbarous intolerance to wish to ill-treat such a man; he is no more guilty toward society, whatever may be his errors, than is, as I have just said, the one who should have come into the world blind in one eye or lame! And it is as unjust to punish or mock the former as it would be to torment the other or banter him. The man endowed with singular tastes is a sick man; he is, if you wish, a woman with hysterics. Would the idea ever come to us to punish or oppose the one or the other? Let us be equally just with the man whose caprices surprise us. Completely comparable to the sick man or the hysteric, he is like them to be pitied and not to be blamed. Such is the moral excuse of the people whom this concerns; the physical one will doubtless be found with the same facility; and when the science of anatomy shall be perfected the relation of the organization of man to the tastes which will have affected him will readily be demonstrated. Pedants, turnkeys, legislators, the tonsured rabble, executioners, what will you do when we shall have come to this? What will become of your laws, your morality, your religion, your gallows, your paradise, your gods, and your hell, when it shall be demonstrated that such or such a stream of liquors, such a kind of fibres, such a degree of acridity in the blood or in the animal spirits suffice to make a man the object of your penalties or your rewards?

ON THE TASTE FOR SCANDAL

I suppose that you are too free from religious errors not to be deeply persuaded that everything which tends to deride the piety of fools can have no sort of consequence. These fantasies have so little of it that they ought to warm only very young heads, for which all rupture of restraint becomes an enjoyment; it is a species of minor criminal prosecution which kindles the imagination and which, doubtless, can amuse on some occasions. But these sensualities, it seems to me, ought to become insipid and cold when one has had time to inform himself and become convinced of the nullity of the objects of which the idols we jeer at are only a puny representation. To profane the relics, the images of saints, the host, the crucifixes, all this in the eyes of the philosopher ought to be only what the degradation of a pagan statue would be. Once one has dedicated these execrable baubles to scorn, he must leave them there without bothering himself further with them. It is good to save only blasphemy from all this. Not that it is any more real, for from the moment there is no more god, what does it serve to insult his name? But in the intoxication of pleasure it is essential to pronounce strong or filthy words, and those of blasphemy serve the imagination well. Nothing must be spared: these words must be ornamented with the greatest luxury of expression possible; they must scandalize as much as possible, for it is very sweet to scandalize. In this there exists a little triumph for the pride which is in nowise to be disdained. I confess to you this is one of my secret sensualities; there are few moral pleasures more active upon my imagination. Try it, and you will see what it results in. Display a prodigious impiety for everything when you find yourself with persons of your age who are still vegetating in the shadows of superstition. Advertise debauchery and libertinism; make a show of playing the "girl," or letting them see your breast; if you go with them into secret places, tuck up your clothes indecently; with affectation let them see the most secret parts of your body; demand the same thing of them; seduce them, preach to them, make them see the ridiculousness of their prejudices; set them about what is called "evil;" swear like a man with them; if they are younger than you, take them by force, amuse yourself with them, and corrupt them either by example, by counsel, or, in a word, by everything you can think of most capable of perverting them. Likewise be extremely free with the men; advertise irreligion and shamelessness with them; far from taking fright at the liberties they will endeavor, grant them mysteriously everything that can amuse them without compromising you. Let yourself be handled by them, play with them, have yourself played with, even go so far as to grant their unnatural desires; but since the chimerical honor of women is dependent upon their anterior firstlings, be more difficult on this. Once married, take some lackeys, but no lover, or pay some reliable young men. From this time on, everything is covered; no more injuries to your reputation, and without anyone's ever having been able to suspect you, you have found the art of doing everything that pleases you.

ON SODOMY

"You have not reassured me on the enormous crime that I have always heard sodomy said to be, and especially between man and man... Let us see, Monsieur, how your philosophy explains this sort of offense: it is frightful, is it not?"

"To begin with, Eugenie, nothing in libertinism is frightful because everything that libertinism inspires is equally of nature. The most bizarre, the most extraordinary actions, those which seem apparently to clash with all laws, with all human institutions (as for Heaven, I do not speak), indeed! Eugenie, even these latter are not frightful, and there is not a one of them that cannot show itself in nature. It is certain that the one of which you speak, pretty Eugenie, is the relative to which is found so singular a fable in the flat romance of Holy Scriptures, the tedious compilation of an ignorant Jew during the bondage of Babylon; but it is false, beyond all probability, that it was in punishment of those errors that these cities, or rather these straggling villages, had perished by fire. Situated on the craters of some old volcanoes, Sodom and Gomorrah perished like those cities of Italy that the lavas of Vesuvius swallowed up. There is the whole of the miracle, but it was nevertheless from this quite simple occurrence that people went on barbarously to invent the torture of fire against the unfortunate beings who in one part of Europe gave themselves over to this natural fantasy."

"Oh! Natural?"

"Yes, natural, I maintain. Nature does not have two voices, one of which daily takes the task of condemning what the other inspires, and it is quite certain that it is only through its medium that the men infected by this mania receive the impressions that lead them to it. Those who wish to proscribe or condemn this taste pretend that it is injurious to population. How dull they are, these imbeciles, who never have anything but this idea of population in their heads and who never see anything but crime in anything that deviates from it! Is it then demonstrated that nature has such great need of this population as they would have us believe? Is it quite certain that a person outrages it each time that he swerves from this stupid propagation? Let us for a moment scrutinize, in order to convince ourselves of it, both its course and its laws. If nature did nothing but create and never destroy, I should be able to believe with these wearisome sophists that the most sublime of all acts would be to work ceaselessly at the one which produces, and in consequence of this I should grant them that the refusal to produce should necessarily be a crime. But does not the slightest glance at the operations of nature prove that destructions are as necessary to its plans as creations; that both of these operations link and even bind themselves together so intimately that it becomes impossible for one to act without the other; that nothing would be born, nothing would be regenerated without some destructions? Destruction is therefore one of the laws of nature like creation. This principle admitted, how can I offend this nature by refusing to create? This, to suppose evil in the action, would doubtless become infinitely less great than that of destroying, which nevertheless finds itself in its laws, as I have just proved. If on the one hand I thus admit the inclination that nature gives me to this waste, and on the other I look into its necessity for it and that in giving myself over to it I but enter into its plans, where then will be the crime, I ask you? But fools and populators, which are synonymous, still object to you that this productive sperm can be placed in your loins for no other use than that of propagation: to turn it away from that is an offense. First, I have just proved that it is not, since this waste would not even be equivalent to a destruction, and since destruction, much more important than waste, would not itself be a crime. Secondly, it is false to suppose that nature wishes that this spermatic liquor be absolutely and entirely destined for producing. If this were so, not only would it not permit that this flow take place in all other cases, as experience proves to us since we lose it both when and where we will, but further it would oppose these wastes taking place without coition, as happens both in our dreams and in our memories. Sparing of a liquor so precious, it would never be save in the vessel of propagation that it would permit its flow. It absolutely would not wish that the voluptuous-

ness with which it then crowns us might be able to be felt when we should turn away our homage, for it would not be reasonable to suppose that it could consent to give us pleasure even at the moment when we should be overwhelming it with outrages.

"Let us go farther. If woman was born only in order to produce, which would assuredly be the case if this production were so dear to nature, would it come about, taking the longest life of a woman, that there nevertheless are only seven years, all deductions made, in which she is in a condition to give life to her kind? What! Nature is avid for propagation; everything which does not tend toward this end offends it, and of a hundred years of life the sex intended for producing will be able to do so only during seven years? Nature wishes only propagation, and the semen that it lends man to serve this propagation is cast away as much as it please man! He finds the same pleasure in his waste as in the useful employment, and never the least inconvenience! . . . Let us cease, my friends, let us cease from believing in such absurdities: they make good sense shudder. Ah! far from outraging nature, let us on the contrary quite persuade ourselves that the sodomite and tribade serve it in stubbornly refusing themselves to a conjunction from which there only results a progeny wearisome for it. This propagation, let us not deceive ourselves about it, was never one of its laws, but a tolerance at most, I have told you. Eh! what matter that the race of man die out, or annihilate itself on earth! It laughs at our pride in persuading ourselves that everything should end if this misfortune took place! But it would scarcely be aware of it. Do you imagine there has not already been some extinct races? Buffon counts several of them, and nature is so dumb to so precious a loss that it is barely aware of it. The entire species could be destroyed, yet the air would be no less pure for it, the stars no less brilliant, nor the progress of the universe less exact. What imbecility it requires to believe that our species is so useful to the world that he who should not work to propagate it, or he who should disturb this propagation, would necessarily become a criminal! Let us cease blinding ourselves on this point and let the example of peoples more reasonable than we serve to persuade us of our errors. There is not a single corner on earth where this pretended crime of sodomy has not had temples and votaries. The Greeks who, so to speak, made a virtue of it, erected a statue to it under the name of Venus Callipyge; Rome went out to seek laws at Athens and brought back this divine taste from it. What progress do we not see it make under the emperors? In the shelter of the Roman eagles it spread itself from one end of the earth to the other. At the destruction of the empire it takes refuge near the tiara, it follows the arts in Italy, and it comes to us when we become civilized. Do we discover a hemisphere, there we find sodomy. Cook drops anchor in a new world: it reigns there. If our balloons had been to the moon, it would be found there quite the same. Delicious taste, child of nature and pleasure, you must be everywhere that men are to be found, and everywhere that you are known they will erect altars to you!

"Oh, my friends, can there be an extravagance comparable to that of imagining that a man must be a monster worthy of losing his life because in his enjoyment he preferred its approach through a *cul* to that of a *con*, because a young man with whom he finds two pleasures, those of at the same time being lover and mistress, appeared to him preferable to a girl who promises him but one enjoyment! He will be a scoundrel, a monster, for having wished to play the role of a sex that is not his! Eh! why has nature created him sensible to this pleasure? Examine his conformation; you will there observe some complete differences from that of men who have not received a share of this taste. The character of this man, again different from that of the others, will be softer and more flexible; you will find in him almost all the vices and virtues of women, you will even recognize their weakness; all will have their passions and some of their traits. Thus, would it be possible

that nature in assimilating them in this manner to women could become irritated because they have their tastes? Is it not clear that his is a class of men different from the other and which nature created thus in order to diminish this propagation whose too great spread would infallibly be injurious to it? . . .

"Ah, my dear Eugénie, if you but knew what delicious joy there is to be found in the practice of this sport! No, no, in the whole world there is not an enjoyment to equal this: it is that of the philosophers, it is that of heroes, and it would be that of the gods, if the parts of this divine enjoyment were not themselves the sole gods that we should adore on earth!"

ON THE FELICITY OF CORRUPTION

Let us guard well against ever resisting the sort of corruption the species of immorality into which our penchants drag us; there is not the least harm in giving ourselves over to them.

Man was indeed stupidly deceived when he said there was a sort of natural justice, ever engraven in the heart of man, and that the result of this law was found to be the absurd precept not to do to others what we would not have done to us. This ridiculous law, the fruit of the weakness of the inert being, could never hatch in the heart of the individual endowed with any energy; and, if I had some moral principles to establish, it would not be in the soul of the weak being that I should go to seek precepts. He who fears to receive evil will always say that it must not be done; whilst he who mocks the gods, men, and the laws, will never leave off committing it. What is necessary is to know which of the two is good or bad; and it seems to me that such a thing should never even be placed in question. I defy the virtuous man to maintain to me in good faith that he has felt, in giving himself over to a good action, even a quarter of the pleasure experienced by him who has just committed an evil one.

Whence does it follow, therefore, being free to choose, that I shall come to prefer the manner which does not stir one to that from which there is perpetually born the most tumultuous and agreeable agitations that man may ever experience? Let us extend our ideas; let us judge the whole of society; and we shall easily convince ourselves that the happiest of all will of necessity be he who is the most gangrened, and this generally in all his aspects. I am far from limiting myself to a few partial depravations; I do not wish that one be simply libertine, drunkard, robber, impious, etc. . . . I demand that he try everything, that he give himself over to everything, and always to extravagances that appear the most monstrous, because it is only by extending the sphere of his disorders that he ought the sooner to arrive at the measure of felicity promised by disorder. The false ideas we have from the creatures who are about us are still the source of an infinitude of morally erroneous judgments; we fabricate for ourselves chimerical duties toward these creatures, and this because they believe themselves bound to the same toward us. Let us have the strength to renounce what we expect of others, and our duties toward them will soon destroy themselves. What I ask you, are all the creatures of earth compared with a single one of our desires? And for what reason should I deprive myself of the slightest of these desires in order to please a creature who is nothing to me and who in nowise interests me? If I fear something of him, assuredly I ought to treat him with caution, not for him but for myself, because in general it should be only for myself that I act in this world. But if I have no cause for apprehension concerning him, I ought quite certainly to draw from him everything I can to better my pleasures and to consider them all only as beings created purely to serve them. Morality, I

repeat, is therefore useless for happiness; I say further, it is injurious to it. And it ever will be only in the bosom of the most extended and general corruption that individuals, like societies, will find the greatest measure of earthly felicity.

ON PROSTITUTION

By what right do you pretend that women ought to be excepted from the blind submission to the caprices of men which nature prescribes for them, and then by what other right do you pretend to enslave them to a continence impossible for their physical make-up and absolutely useless to their honor?

It is certain that, in the state of nature, women are "vulgivaque," that is to say enjoying the advantages of the other female animals and belonging, like them and without any exception, to all males. Such were, without any doubt, the first laws of nature and the only institutions of the first assemblages made by men. "Interest, egoism, and love" degraded these early viewpoints, so simple and so natural. A person thought to enrich himself by taking a woman, and with her the property of her family; there the first two sentiments I have just indicated are satisfied. Still oftener, he stole this woman and attached her to himself; there is the second motive in action, and, in all cases, injustice. Never can an act of possession be exercised upon a free being; it is as unjust to possess a woman exclusively as it is to possess slaves. All men are born free, all have equal rights; let us never lose sight of these principles. According to this, the legitimate right can never be given one sex exclusively to take possession of the other, and never can one of the sexes or one of the classes possess the other arbitrarily. In the purity of the laws of nature, a woman cannot plead as reason for the refusal she makes him who desires her, the love she has for another, for this reason becomes an exclusion, and because no man can be excluded from the possession of a woman from the moment that it is clear that she belongs decisively to all men. The act of possession may be exercised only upon a fixture or an animal; it can never be done on an individual who resembles us, and all bonds of whatever sort you may suppose which can chain a woman to a man are as unjust as they are chimerical. If it therefore becomes incontestable that we have received from nature the right to express our desires indifferently to all women, it likewise develops that we have that of obliging her to submit to our desires, not exclusively, for I would not contradict myself, but momentarily. Let no one say that I contradict myself on this and that after having established above that we have no right to bind a woman to us, I destroy these principles by saying that we have the right to constrain her. I repeat that it here is only a question of enjoyment and not of ownership; I have no least right of the ownership of the spring I encounter along my road, but I have certain rights to its enjoyment, I have the right to profit from the limpid water it offers to my thirst. Likewise, I have no real right to the ownership of such or such a woman, but I have an incontestable one to her enjoyment, and I have a right to constrain her to this enjoyment if she refuses it to me for any reason whatsoever. It is incontestable that we have the right to set up laws which force her to yield to the fires of him who desires her; violence itself being one of the effects of this right, we can also employ it. Eh! has not nature proven that we have this right by endowing us with the strength necessary to submit them to our desires?

In vain must women make talk for their defense either of decency or their attachment to other men. These chimerical pleas are null. We have seen above how factitious and contemptible a sentiment decency was; love, which may be called "the folly of the soul," has no

greater title to legitimize their constancy: satisfying but two individuals, the loved person and the loving person, it cannot serve the happiness of others, and it is for the happiness of all and not for that of a privileged few that we have been given women. Therefore, all men have a right to the equal enjoyment of all women; thus there is no man who, according to the laws of nature, can set up for himself a unique and personal right. The law which will oblige them to prostitute themselves, so far as we will wish it, in the houses of debauchery that have just been in question, and which will constrain them to it if they refuse, which will punish them if they fail in it, is therefore one of the most equitable of laws and against which no legitimate or just reason could be opposed. A man who would enjoy any woman or girl whatsoever will thus be able, if the laws that you promulgate are just, to have her summoned to appear in one of the houses I have spoken of; and there, under the protection of the matrons of this temple of Venus, she will be delivered to him to satisfy, with as much humility as submission, all the caprices it will please him to indulge in with her, however odd and irregular they may be, because there can be none of them which is not in nature, none which may not be allowed by her. It then would no longer be a question of fixing an age, for I maintain that this cannot be done without hindering the liberty of him who desires the enjoyment of a girl of such and such an age. He who has the right to eat the fruit of a tree may assuredly pick it ripe or green, according to the inspiration of his taste. But, it will be objected, there is an age at which the proceedings of the man will decidedly injure the health of the girl. This consideration is without any value: from the time that you grant me the right of ownership upon enjoyment, this right is independent of the effects produced by the enjoyment; from this moment it becomes all one whether this enjoyment be advantageous or injurious to the object which must submit to it. Have I not already proven that it is legal to constrain the will of a woman on this matter and that as soon as she inspires the desire for enjoyment she must submit herself to this enjoyment, abstraction being made of all egoistic sentiment? It is the same with her health. From the time that the respect one might have for this consideration destroys or weakens the enjoyment of him who desires her, and who has the right to appropriate her to himself, this consideration of age becomes null because here in nowise is it a question of what can be experienced by the object, condemned by nature and law to the momentary assuagement of the desires of the other. In this examination it is a matter only of what suits him who desires. We shall restore the balance.

Yes, we shall restore it, and undoubtedly we should do so; these women whom we have just so cruelly enslaved, we should indemnify them.

If we admit, as we have just done, that all women ought to be subject to our desires, assuredly we can likewise permit them amply to satisfy all theirs. Our laws should on this score favor their fiery temperament, and it is absurd to have placed both their honor and their virtue in the unnatural strength they use in resisting the inclinations they have received in greater profusion than we. This injustice in our manners is all the more crying as we consent at the same time to render them helpless through seduction and then punish them for yielding to all the efforts we have made to provoke their fall. All the absurdity of our manners is engraven, it seems to me, in this inequitable atrocity, and this exposure alone should make us feel our extreme need for changing them for purer ones.

Therefore I say that women having received much more violent inclinations for the pleasures of the flesh than we, they should give themselves over to them as much as they wish, absolutely disengaged from all the bonds of Hymen, from all the false prejudices of shame, completely restored to the state of nature. I would that the law permit them

to give themselves to as many men as seems good to them; I would that the enjoyment of all the sexes and of all the parts of their body be permitted to them as to the men; and under the special condition of giving themselves equally to all those who will desire them, it is necessary that they have the liberty of enjoying equally all those whom they will believe worthy of satisfying them. What, I ask, are the dangers of this license? Children who will have no fathers? Ah! what matter in a Republic where all individuals need have no mother other than the homeland, where all those who are born are children of the fatherland? Ah! how much better will they love it who, having known only it, will from the time of their birth be sure that it is from it alone that they must expect everything! Do not think to make good Republicans while you isolate in their families the children who should belong only to the Republic. By there giving to a few individuals alone the measure of affection that they should distribute to all their brothers, they inevitably adopt from these individuals prejudices which are often dangerous; their opinions, their ideas, become isolated, particularized, and all the virtues of a man of the State become absolutely impossible for them. Abandoning, finally, their heart entirely to those who have given them birth, they no longer find in their heart any affection for the one that should make them live, make them known and illustrious, as if these other benefits were not more important than the first. Since there is the greatest objection to allowing children thus to imbibe in their family interests often quite different from those of the fatherland, there therefore is the greatest advantage in separating them from it. And is this not brought about naturally by the means I propose, since by destroying completely all bonds of marriage there will no longer be born any fruits of the pleasures of woman other than children to whom the knowledge of their father is absolutely forbidden, and with this the means of belonging to one particular family instead of being, as they should, solely children of the fatherland?

Therefore there will be houses intended for the libertinism of women and, like those for men, under the protection of the government; there they will be furnished with all the individuals of both sexes that they could desire, and the more that they will frequent these houses, the more will they be esteemed. There is nothing so barbarous and so ridiculous as having connected the honor and virtue of women with the resistance they make to the desires they have received from nature and which ceaselessly inflame those who have the barbarity to censure them. From the tenderest age (the Babylonian girls did not wait for their seventh year to carry their first-fruits to the temple of Venus. The first stirring of concupiscence that a young girl experiences is the time that nature points out for her to prostitute herself, and without any other sort of consideration she ought to yield from the time that nature speaks; she outrages its laws if she resists), a girl relieved from paternal ties, no longer having anything to save for marriage (completely abolished by the laws I desire), above the prejudices formerly hindering her sex, will thus be able to give herself over to everything that her temperament will dictate to her in the houses established for this purpose. There she will be received with respect, satisfied with profusion, and upon returning into society she will be able to speak as publicly of the pleasure she will have tasted as she does today of a ball or a promenade. Charming sex, you will be free; like all men you will enjoy all the pleasures that nature makes a duty for you; you will restrain yourself on none of them. Ought the most divine part of humanity thus receive chains from the other? Ah! break them, nature wishes it; no longer have any other curbs than that of your inclinations, any other laws than your own desires, any other morality than that of nature; languish no longer in those barbarous prejudices which withered your charms and held captive the divine outbursts of your heart. Women do not know to what degree their lasciviousness adorns them. Let one compare two

women of closely similar age and beauty, one of whom lives in celibacy and the other in libertinism: it will be seen how much this latter has the advantages in brilliancy and freshness. All violence done to nature wears much more than the abuse of pleasure; there is no one who does not know that the couch beautifies a woman. You are free like us, and the career of the combats of Venus is open to you as to us. Fear no longer any absurd reproaches; pedantry and superstition are destroyed. No longer will you be seen to blush for your charming extravagances. Crowned with myrtle and roses, the esteem that we shall conceive for you will be only in proportion to the greatness of the extent to which you will have allowed yourselves to be given to them.

ON THE DEBAUCH OF THE SENSES

"If there is anything delightful in the world," said Rodin, when he was calm, "it is libertinism. Where will one find a passion that holds all our senses in a more lascivious titillation? Is there anything on earth that makes one happier? It is libertinism that breaks childhood's toys; it is it that lights the torch of reason, that gives energy to man. And if this is so, ought not he to infer that it is for this pleasure alone that nature has created him? Let him place all the others parallel with this and he will see that it is different; he will see if there is a single one which grips him with as much ardor. Its empire over the soul is such that as soon as it is filled with it the soul can no longer think of any other thing.

"Examine a truly debauched man and you will see him always occupied either with what he is doing or with what he is planning to do. Perfectly indifferent to everything that does not concern his pleasures, you will see him pensive, concentrated in himself, as if he feared to give way to a tendency which could for a minute distract him from the libidinous ideas that are inflaming him. One would say that once attached to the cult of this god it becomes absolutely impossible for him to be stirred by anything whatsoever, and that nothing is capable of distracting his soul from the delightful passion that captivates it. Therefore it is to this alone that we should sacrifice all; this alone should be respectable in our eyes. Sovereignly scorn everything that takes you from it or combats it; and in order better to make proof to it of our homage, let us plunge ourselves blindly into all the extravagances of its vices. Let nothing be sacred for us save what characterizes it or serves it; let us feel, exist, breathe only for it; it is only fools who find it dangerous. Eh! how could a refinement of pleasure ever be that? Is libertinism anything else? Undoubtedly, no. Well, how much the reader may it have some inconveniences? I say further, these very inconveniences, did they exist, would they not still be preferable to all the dangers of temperance . . . to all the boredom of prudence? Is not the state of inertia of the sober man the picture of the sleep of death? The cold and indifferent man is the repose of nature: what does he serve in the universe? What does he set in movement? What does he execute? What is his pedantry good for? If he is null, is not this condemnable? And is he not from then on a burden to society? If temperance and sobriety unfortunately dominated the world, everything there would languish, would vegetate, there would no longer be either movement or force, and everything would fall back into chaos. That is what our moralists will not understand, because ceaselessly supporting their principles on religious bases, they cannot conceive a state outside the plans of their deity, whereas there is no deity and this monster of man's overheated imagination can never count for anything in the calculations of philosophy. But one quite singular thing is that the curbs man places upon libertinism are only the spurs of libertinism itself: is not shame, the

first of these curbs, one of the most active stimulants of this passion? It is essential to lust. One is angry that another knows of our fantasies; it seems that they should be understood only by us, and that everyone who is not US should not have the wit to comprehend them. Such was the first motive that caused veils to be thrown over impure actions; one did not wish to do before everyone what it seemed everyone should not know of; but the curtain was drawn only to redouble the excesses. Let us not doubt that there had been less libertines if cynicism were the style. One hides himself only because he wishes to leave the usual order; and the first one who, in the infancy of societies, made his mistress pass behind a bush, was the most libertine of the tribe.

"Let us corrupt ourselves, then, my children, let us then soil ourselves with all possible impurities; let us pursue the pleasures of the flesh without rule or measure; let us loose the bridle on all our inclinations; let us cherish our tastes; and let us be certain that the more we shall give ourselves over to the DEBAUCH OF THE SENSES, the more shall we approach the happiness with which lubricity will always crown those who cherish and serve it!"

ON THE CRUELTY OF NATURE

One day while examining Etna, whose bosom was vomiting flames, I desired to be this famous volcano.

"Mouth of Hell," I cried out, contemplating it, "if like you I could engulf all the cities that surround me, what tears I should not make flow!"

Scarcely had my invocation been pronounced when I heard a noise nearby: a man was listening to me.

"You have just formulated a strange desire," said this person to me.

"In the state in which I am," I answered him humorously, "one formulates still more extraordinary ones."

"So be it," responded my man; "but let us hold to the one we have just spoken of, and learn from me that it is possible! I am a chemist; I have passed my life studying nature. Immortality nurturing my studies, it is for 20 years now only to the misfortune of men that I consecrate my discoveries. You see, as I am speaking to you, your singular desire has convinced me of the confidence I could have in you. Learn, then, that one may counterfeit the terrible eruptions of this mountain. If you wish, we shall try it together."

"Sir," I said to the man, inviting him to sit down with me near a tree, "let us talk, I beg you. Is it quite true that you can imitate a volcano?"

"Nothing is easier."

"And we shall produce, by the effervescence of this factitious volcano, the same effects as an earthquake?"

"Absolutely!"

"We shall destroy cities?"

"We shall entirely destroy them; we shall upset the whole island."

"Let us act, sir, let us act; I shall cover you with gold if you succeed."

"I ask nothing of you," my man answered me. "Evil amuses me, and when I give myself to it I never have myself paid. I sell only recipes that are useful to men; I distribute for nothing all those that are injurious to them."

I could not grow weary of contemplating this person.

"How happy one is, sir," I said to him with enthusiasm, "when he encounters people who think as himself! And tell me, heavenly man! what is the motive that makes you do evil, and what do you experience in doing it?"

"Listen to me," said Almaní (this was the name of the chemist), "I

am going to answer your questions. The motive which engages me to give myself to evil is born in me of the profound study I have made of nature. The more I have sought to surprise her secrets, the more have I seen her solely occupied with injuring men. Follow her in all her operations, you will never find her anything but voracious, destructive, and wicked, ever inconsistent, provoking, and devastating. Cast your eyes for a moment upon the immensity of the evils her infernal hand strews upon us in this world. What does it serve to create us in order to make us so unhappy? Why does our sorry individual, as well as all those she produces, leave her laboratory so full of imperfections? Would not one say that her murderous art had wished to fashion only victims, that evil is her sole purpose, and that it is only in order to cover the earth with blood, tears, and mourning that she is endowed with the creative faculty, that it is only in order to display her scourges that she uses her energy? One of your modern philosophers styled himself the lover of nature; ah, indeed! I, my friend, I declare myself her executioner. Study her, follow her, this atrocious nature, you will never see her create except to destroy, arrive at her ends only through murders, and grow fat, like the Minotaur, only by the misfortune and destruction of men. What esteem, what love could you therefore have for such a force, whose effects are always directed against you? You will never see her dispense a gift without a grave pain accompanying it. If she lights up 12 hours for you, it is to plunge you into the shadows for 12 others. She allows you to enjoy the sweetness of summer, but it is only by accompanying it with the horrors of lightning. Near the most healthful herbs, her treacherous hand makes poisons germinate. She has the most beautiful country of the world bristle with volcanos which put it in ashes. She for a moment adorns herself for your eyes, only to cover herself with frost for the other part of the year. She gives us some vigor during the early part of our life, but it is only to overwhelm us during old age with torments and griefs. For a moment she allows you to enjoy the bizarre picture of this world, but only so that in surveying the dismal course of things that present it, you are at each step frightened at the terrible misfortunes that lurk there. See with what wicked art she intermingles your days with a little pleasure and a great deal of pain; examine coldly, if it is possible for you to do so, the maladies with which she overwhelms you, the divisions she causes to spring up amongst you, the frightful consequences with which she wishes your sweetest passions to be mingled: close to love is frenzy; close to courage, ferocity; close to ambition, murder; close to sensibility, tears; close to wisdom, all the ills of conscience. In what a woeful situation does she place you, in a word, since disgust of life becomes such in your soul that there is not a single man who would wish to begin living again if one should offer him it on the day of his death. Yes, my friend, yes, I abhor nature; it is because I know it well that I detest it. Instructed in its terrible secrets, I turned my thoughts inward and I felt (there is my answer to your second question), I experienced a sort of ineffable pleasure in copying its baseness.

"Indeed," I continued to tell myself, 'is there a being as contemptible, as odious, as the one that gave me life only to have me find pleasure in everything that injures my kind! What!' (I was then 16 years old), I am barely out of this monster's cradle when I am carried away by the same horrors as those which delight her! This is no longer corruption, for I am scarcely born; it is inclination, penchant. Her barbarous hand therefore knows how to mould only evil; so evil diverts her, and I should love such a mother? No. I shall imitate her, but while detesting her; I shall copy her, she wishes it, but it shall be only while cursing her. And furious at seeing my passions serve her, I am going to unravel her secrets so well that I may be able to become, if it is possible, even more wicked in order better to hurt her all my life. Her murderous nets are stretched over us alone; let us try to envelop her there herself while

polluting her, if we can. Let us obstruct her in her works, in order to insult her more keenly; and let us confound her, if possible, so as far more surely to outrage her.'

"But the whore made sport of me; her resources surpassed mine: we struggled too unequally. While offering me only her effects, she concealed from me all her causes. I have therefore limited myself to the imitation of the first; not being able to divine the cause that placed the dagger in her hands, I have been able to steal the weapon from her and with it I have served everyone as she."

"Oh! my friend," I cried out in enthusiasm, "I never saw an imagination more ardent than yours. . . . What energy! . . . What vigor! . . . And what evil you must have done in the world with so keen a head!"

"I exist only through evil and for EVIL," Almani answered me; "evil alone moves me; I breathe only by committing it; my organism is delighted by it alone!"

NOTES AND COMMENTS

By E. Haldeman-Julius

Reprinted from The American Freeman, Published at Girard, Kansas.

Sailor: "At this California naval base, we've had a little amusing excitement that Freeman readers may like to hear about. A rumor swept the place that all the officers are fairies, that this base has become the navy's center to which all officer-swishes must be shipped as soon as their patterns of behavior are discovered. A thorough inquiry was ordered to learn how such a rumor got started. Finally, it was discovered to have resulted from the fact that the base's rest rooms come in threes—one labeled Men, one-labeled Women, and one labeled Officers."

Soldier: "Spam is a ham that didn't pass its physical."

Husband: "Let's have some real fun tonight." Wife: "Okay. Leave the hall light on if you get home before I do."

Oscar Levant, to starlet: "Drinking makes you beautiful." Girl: "But I haven't been drinking." Oscar: "I know, but I have."

W. C. Fields: "There's a literary phony in Hollywood who doesn't even hesitate to palm off Oscar Wilde's best epigrams as his own."

Woman: "My ol' man's gone fish-in'. If you're set on findin' him you wanna walk a piece down to the crick an' keep walkin' until you find a pole with a worm on each end."

They were spending their 50th Winter together in the old, beautiful, spacious farmhouse. It had been snowing. The world was cov-

ered with a lovely mantle of snow. The logs were burning quietly in the huge fireplace. There was peace, security and harmony in every sound and move. Finally, the old woman said, slowly and sweetly: "I've been thinking how long we've been living together and that it couldn't go on forever like this. The time will soon come when one of us will have to go. Now, I'm not worrying about that now, but I was just trying to decide that when it does happen whether I should go to California or Florida."

Cafe owner: "I'm the guy who made the discovery 20 years ago that a few slivers of chicken draped esthetically over a mediocre portion of dressing has all the looks of a hefty helping of both. This deceives both the guys and the gals, which shows it's foolproof."

Dr. Patsy O'Bang, professor of English literature, closed a Harvard lecture with this announcement: "Tomorrow we shall study Sir Walter Scott's 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel' and try to find out why he didn't even mention her."

Bishop Beerbelch, to Patsy O'Bang: "The trouble with you materialists, O'Bang, is that you believe only what you can see and touch, and you trust too completely in Reason." Patsy O'Bang: "Make up your mind, Bishop Beerbelch. I can't see or touch Reason."

In his younger days, Bishop Beerbelch served the Ethereal Esquire as a missionary in the wilds of Borneo, where, after hard work, he

converted a whole tribe of cannibals. A year later, they invited Beerbelch to a grand feast to celebrate their first year of salvation and grace. "This meat," said young Beerbelch, "is exquisitely delicious. What is it?" "My favorite wife," beamed the chief. "We didn't think you'd mind one slight deviation to celebrate the grand occasion of our conversion."

Ivan Russky, explaining a problem in Americanese to another Muscovite: "'Okie-dokie' is the feminine of O. K."

Sign in grocery. "Three hours ago our milk was grass."

Bernard Shaw: "In heaven, an angel is nobody in particular."

Groucho Marx: "They're the kind of non-departing guests that when they stand up they think they've gone."

Sign in a delicatessen store: "If you don't smell it, we ain't got it."

Henry David Thoreau (whose writings are admired by many H-J customers) on city life: "Millions of people being lonesome together."

Groucho Marx: "If you're goofy enough to want to tell the truth, for Gawd's sake speak quickly and leave in a hurry."

A candidate for coroner in Missouri got elected on this platform: "You'll have to be really dead before I bury you."

Patsy O'Bang, to restaurateur: "Eating here has helped me solve a delicate problem in zoology. Now I know that the hare and the turtle finally came together. How? By the hair I've found in this turtle soup."

Heard in passing: "Gee, I wish I had enough money to go to Ecuador. Not that I want to go to Ecuador. I just want the money."

Another judge deplores the degeneracy of the age. "There are", he says, "girls of 12 who seem to have developed as much as women of 19 and 20, and sometimes they have not only the appearance but

the instincts of grown-up women." Does he want to go back to the days when girls were so educated that the young women of 19 had the mentality of a girl of 12? These degenerate girls of our time have done a fine job of work in the last three years even if they have had to retire occasionally.

"I painted this picture to keep the wolf from the door" the artist said to the dealer. "Then keep it on the door," said the dealer, "preferably the back door."

The soldiers sent a lance-corporal to complain to the orderly officer that the bread was stale and hard. "Tell them not to make a fuss about trifles," the officer said. "If Napoleon had had that bread when he was crossing the Alps he would have eaten it without a word." "Yes sir," said the corporal, "perhaps it was fresh then."

The distinguished British historian G. M. Trevelyan, a Rationalist (if you press him), said recently in the course of a public lecture. "It is a relief to escape from our own mechanical age to an age when the craftsman was more and the machine less, when imagination was more and science less." We fear that though it is not free from ambiguity, this will be quoted as one more tribute to the beauty of the Ages of Faith wrung from a great Rationalist. As a matter of fact Trevelyan is one of the scholars who has never moved a finger for Rationalism. All the same he would have been burned alive in his beautiful Middle Ages, and the craftsmen he extols lived on an average less than 30 years and were despised and exploited by princes, knights, bishops, and all the rest of their "betters."

An archbishop about the same date as Trevelyan showed how the theological mind approves the vague language which too many of our historians who are not specialists on the Middle Ages now use. He said: "Those were the days when men built cathedrals, monasteries, and universities: now they build gasworks, factories, and technical

high schools." We must, he went on, get rid of this corroding atheism. Of course, we don't build universities today or hospitals (which hardly existed in the Middle Ages), or princely places of entertainment, baths . . . But there is no need to extend the list. For one man or woman who had a good time in the Middle Ages a hundred did not; and a bishop ought at least to know that the rich one-tenth in the Middle Ages were shockingly immoral, very cruel, dishonest, and contemptuous of the people they exploited. The great age of Cathedral-building and craftsmen, the thirteenth century, was one of the lowest, morally, in the history of civilized Europe.

A bishop has been telling his people very energetically that the Church does not advertise itself sufficiently. He says that they have an unreasonable prejudice against using the press, radio, the cinema, etc. "to bring home the eternal truths of Christianity to a generation that has forgotten God." It sounds ominous. As things are you can scarcely open your daily or Sunday paper without seeing some lip-homage to the churches. Sermons and services are droned into your ears from the radio. Occasionally even your cinema gives you a bilious attack by making you sit through a dreary mystic picture instead of cheering you up with Bob Hope or Barbara Stanwyck. The outlook is dark enough without this new horror.

The wife of one of the staff at a fishing camp had a baby, and there was the usual fuss about it. Someone borrowed the spring-balance of one of the anglers in the camp and weighed it. To their astonishment the new-born baby weighed 25 pounds.

A new translation of the Meditations of Marcus Aurelius is out, and the editor meditates a good deal on Marcus. In particular he finds it an insoluble mystery how an emperor with such a beautiful moral code could so fiercely persecute Christians. He would find a good deal of light on the mystery if he

read a little critical history instead of the lives of the saints. He would find in fact that there is almost no persecution to explain. It is doubtful if Marcus ever heard of this Greek-speaking group, with no chapel, across the river (outside the city) who called themselves Christians and quarreled like ladies in a harem. The only "martyr" of Marcus's time that we quite definitely know is Pope "St" Callistus, of whom his contemporary saint and bishop Hippolytus has left us a very bad biographical sketch. He was sent to the mines under Marcus for fraud.

The fire occurred just at the close of the annual firemen's supper. They managed to get there but it was noticed that one man kept muttering, while he directed his hose on the burning building: "Say when, Say when."

"No, a thousand times no," said the girl. "O.K." he said, "but there's no need for the thousand. I only asked you once."

Another attempt to reconcile science and religion. Perhaps says the inventor, who has been reading a little science, religion is not a vestige (or a disappearing organ) but a rudiment (or one only just beginning to develop). What next? Religion has flourished all over the earth for at least 50,000 years (judging from the cultural level of savages), but it has shrunk steadily and notably in the last 150 years. And they call this the rudiment or beginning of a new growth!

A pretty girl called at the country-mansion hospital and asked to see Captain Eric Fortescue. "I am his sister," she explained to the apparent matron at the door. "I am delighted to make your acquaintance," said the matron sweetly. "I'm his mother."

Mystics who cling to the prehistoric idea that the mind is a spirit always point triumphantly to the influence of mind on body; the abdominal effects of fear, for instance, which were known in the days of Rabelais. A team of scien-

tific experts has issued an interesting report on these effects of the emotions. As a matter of argument we did not need it. Common sense tells most of us that in such cases we have merely the action of one organ on others just as when a bilious attack gives you a headache or makes you kick the cat.

One of the most curious bits of plastic surgery during the war is described with names and details in a medical journal. A soldier had his thumb shot away. The surgeons amputated his forefinger and grafted it on the base of the thumb. It sounds like robbing Peter to pay Paul, but the point is that it gave the soldier at least some power to grasp objects.

A curious and unexpected result of the hot bath has recently been discovered. It has been ascertained—wild horses will not drag us to describe the experiments—that it reduces fertility in men and lessens the chances of conception in women. What is more curious is that a warm bath with a lavish use of soap does much the same to women. So when next you see a photo of one of the lovely ladies of Hollywood peeping out of a mass of soap-foam you may think of this.

At a recent teachers' conference one educationist found the true bases of his profession in texts from the gospel. One he quoted was: "It is expedient for you that I should go away." The sound meaning of his advice is clear enough—the business of a teacher is to stimulate the young to educate themselves—but many classes would have been hilarious if they had heard him say that. Other speakers, as usual, stressed the importance of "spirit". One, who may have been reading our challenge to give a precise definition of that sloppy word, said that in spite of its ambiguity pupils must be taught the importance of spirit. It is the first time we heard a teacher recommend something that he admitted to be ambiguous.

Edward G. Robinson, Hollywood art collector and actor: "An art

dealer is a man who sells a painting he doesn't like to a man who doesn't want it at twice its value." . . . To a fine artist, from whom he had just purchased three pictures: "You have done much good work in your long and useful life, and now, from a financial viewpoint, it would be an excellent idea for you to die, though I take it there would be personal objections. You should think of the people who have been buying your numerous masterpieces. They love your work, but would like to see you croak, because their pictures would rise 500 percent in value just on the basis of a tiny newspaper paragraph reporting that you had shuffled off this mortal coil. The more you paint the more you depress values; the moment you die the supply is cut off and the vultures begin bidding for what you've left behind."

Music teacher: "To play like zee angel, you have to work like zee devil."

Bishop Beerbelch: "I do not approve of this new American version of the Bible. If the King James version was good enough for St. Paul, it is good enough for me."

In one of those one-building colleges run by some moth-eaten, fly-specked, sun-bleached, broken-down preachers there was a student who had been unlucky enough to fall under the influence of Ingersoll, Paine, Darrow and McCabe. His room contained hundreds of wicked Little Blue Books, which were sure to damn his soul to hell. Caught in the act, the student told the president that he could find no evidence of the existence of God. "Well, young man," said the Man of Gawd tartly, "if you do not find a God by five o'clock this afternoon, you will leave this college!"

From a cemetery association's circular: "Lots on the hill command a higher price because of the view."

Farmer: "I ain't greedy 'bout land. I only want what jines mine."

About 30 years ago, when W. C. Fields was doing one-night stands

in the Middle West, he turned in for the night at a hotel, dead tired. But he was assigned a room containing three single beds, two of which already had occupants. One of them, Fields learned later, was an old, pious deacon. Soon after the lights were turned off the other occupant began to snore so loudly as to prevent both Fields and the deacon from getting to sleep. The tumult increased as the night wore away, until it became absolutely fearful. Some two or three hours after midnight the snorer turned himself in bed, gave a frightful groan, and became silent. The deacon had supposed Fields asleep, but at this juncture he was heard to exclaim: "He's dead! Thank God! The bastard's dead!"

Gypsy Rose Lee. "There's no 'ism' in Hollywood but plagiarism."

Charlie Chaplin: "Jo Davidson is the last of the savage head-hunters."

Mlle. Alix, expensive dressmaker: "Nobody will be able to get out of bed this season before 5 in the afternoon. There are practically no dresses designed to wear before that time."

Overheard: "I'm having trouble with my chauffeur. He objects to my husband."

Groucho Marx: "She says she's 32. In other words, she admits to 40."

Heywood Broun, presenting a new contract to his employer, was afraid he might be particularly vulnerable, so in order to make sure of a model contract, Broun said: "I want to be sure nothing has been left out of this contract. So, let's add a clause that if anything is left out that should be in—it's automatically included!"

Robert G. Ingersoll: "Whoever produces anything by weary labor, does not need a revelation from heaven to teach him that he has a right to the thing produced."

Millionaire soap manufacturer: "I attribute my success first to clean living. But I could never have won

my fortune without pluck, pluck, pluck! Don't ask me to tell you whom I plucked."

Thomas Jefferson: "The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God."

Viscount Maugham, in a speech in the House of Lords: "A bath is very largely a luxury and water-closets are not really necessary in many rural places at all."

From the speech of a popular birth control advocate: "Early to bed and early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy, and the father of a large family."

An almanac records that an old Jamaica custom permitted persons of wealth to be buried in the church, while those out of funds were buried outside in the churchyard. An inscription on a tombstone reads:
Here I lie outside the church door,
Here I lie because I'm poor;
The further in the more they pay;
But here I lie as snug as they.

Robert Benchley: "When people are talking about labor they mean work; when they begin to shout about it, they almost certainly mean organized workers."

Thomas Hart Benton, Missouri's atomic artist: "I have no prejudice against anyone except, of course, people of refinement." Mrs. Priscilla Prissy-Pratt, personification of refinement and prissiness, once told Benton that she didn't like the nude in his almost life-size "The Rape of Persephone," because, she argued, "the woman is just too naked-looking." Benton retorted, "What do you expect, when she hasn't any clothes on?"

Robert Benchley: "Old party politicians get campaign contributions from the rich and votes from the poor on the ground that they will protect one from the other."

